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Lisa Hudgins

University of South Carolina - Columbia, hudgins@mailbox.sc.edu

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John Bartlam: Redware Potter?

By Lisa R. Hudgins

Research surrounding the John Bartlam pottery site continues to reveal new information about the range of ware produced by the Cainhoy potter. In April of 2008, Garry Atkins and Rod Jellicoe, ceramics scholars from England, joined Michelle Erickson and Robert Hunter of Williamsburg, Virginia, in examining the porcelain and creamware collection excavated at Cainhoy by archaeologist Stan South. These respected scholars confirmed that pieces of molded, unglazed redware pottery found at the Cainhoy site were likely made by potter John Bartlam. The molded redwares are unlike anything found in England, and are identical in design to pineapple wares previously attributed to Bartlam.

In addition to the stylistic similarities, waster sherds found at Cainhoy revealed chunks of refined redware embedded in the emerald green glaze of wares from the site. The red clay intrusions are most likely from slippage during the firing of the kiln, an occurrence familiar to potters everywhere.



Fig. 2: This unglazed pineapple redware sherd is unique to the Bartlam site. (SCIAA photo by Stanley South)

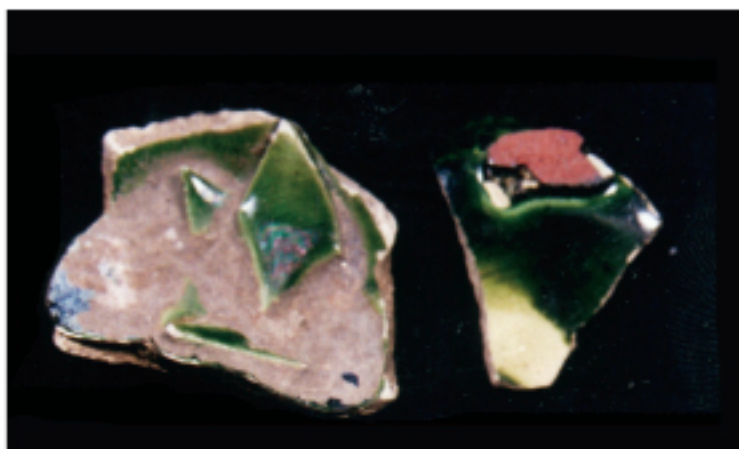


Fig. 3: Waster sherds from Cainhoy with red clay intrusions into the glaze; occurs when two vessels touch during the kiln firing process. (SCIAA photo by Stanley South)

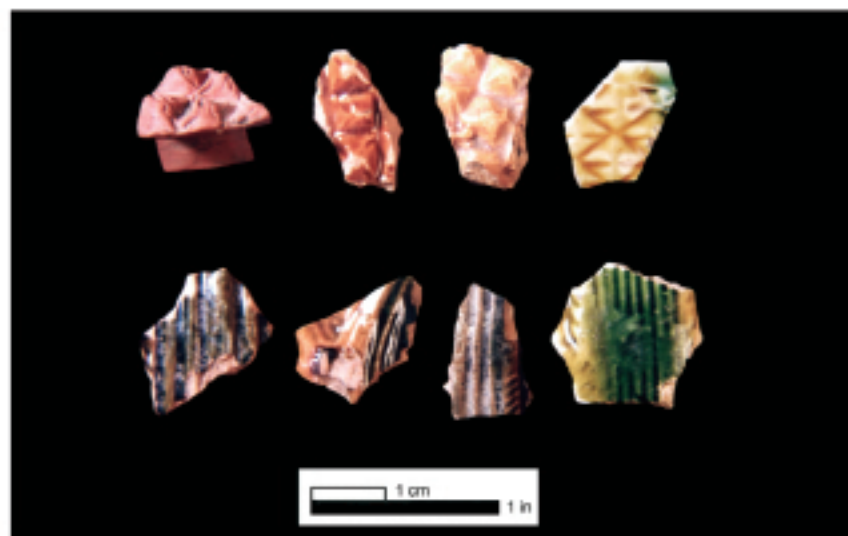


Fig. 1: Pineapple sherds found at Cainhoy. (SCIAA photo by Stanley South)

With the addition of refined redwares to the catalog of Bartlam's wares, we can surmise that the Cainhoy potter was attempting to offer ceramics that would appeal to a wide range of customers, as he offered redware, creamware, and porcelain to the discerning Charleston public.